

Thomas Massner of Coire, 1710

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HONEGGER AND HIS CRITICS.

The Honegger Concert at the Albert Hall was a dismal failure—for the critics. From Arthur Honegger's point of view it was an unqualified success, but the failure of London journalism and pseudo-criticism was practically complete.

The only excuse for London musical writers was the Albert Hall. True, it is difficult to grasp subtleties of orchestration in this great building. Apparently it was impossible for the critics. But the very large audience, after being a little at sea in the earlier stages, gradually began to realise that the work was grand, impressive, thought provoking, and at many odd times when least expected, beautiful in the older fashioned sense of the word. In the face of an obvious popular enthusiasm, the critics went away and wrote notices that gave a very bad impression. This in itself is inexcusable, for popular enthusiasm is often misdirected. But surely it was flying in the face of Providence to condemn a work that had already won the approval of critics really capable of judging such matters!

Without entering into the question of criticism in such towns as New York or Rio, it will be sufficient to recall the effect which the work made at the Festival of the International Society for New Music, held in Zurich last June. As Mademoiselle Wyss pointed out in these columns at the time, "King David" was regarded as being by far the most impressive and significant work presented at the Festival. Many of the best musical brains in the world were present. Amongst the audience were such men as the Director of the "Editions Universels," Scherchen, Furtwangler, Denzler, Gieseking, and a host of really reliable critics from Germany. And their verdict was unanimously in favour of the work.

In opposition to the considered opinion of the experts gathered in Zurich, we have a London Press upon which it is not really necessary to comment. The acknowledged leader made the complaint that the beauty of the piece, such as it was, lay with the wind instruments rather than the string! "This," he said in effect, "is not in the least like Beethoven. How can I be expected to like it!" So much for the 'highbrow' point of view. The 'lowbrow' representative, the man who thought Grisi was an alto, said that he "would not miss this Swiss Miss," or some similar expression of that kind of mentality.

These opinions are scarcely worth mentioning, except in so far as they show that it is inadvisable to place too much reliance upon the views expressed in most of the leading London newspapers upon works of modern music. And if any of the Swiss Colony in London were dismayed to find that the work of this composer, who is of Swiss parentage and partly of Swiss musical education, was held of so little account in London, they can rest assured that this was not the opinion of the real authorities, nor the view of the world at large. *Vice Honegger!* A.G.

THOMAS MASSNER OF COIRE, 1710.*

While Europe was still in the throes of the second series of wars consequent upon the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, shortly before the signing of the peace of Utrecht, a citizen of the little mountain Canton of Grisons made a diversion which drew the excited attention of even the warring powers.

Thomas Massner had a private bank and forwarding agency in Coire. He was rich, highly respected and a member of the town council. Previous to the date when our story opens, this extraordinarily energetic man had established widespread relations of a business kind with various countries, relying entirely upon his own initiative, which in those days was the only road to success. In the year 1691 he dealt energetically with Count Hannibal von Hohenems of Vaduz. This personage had stolen the sum of 4,000 florins from Massner and sent it over the border to Vaduz, in the Vorarlberg (Austrian territory).

Shortly after this the Count, accompanied by two squads of Austrian outriders, for whom he had the right of way, rode into the town of Coire. Massner, as a member of the town council, ordered the gates to be closed and manned and refused to allow the Count to leave until he guaranteed the repayment of the stolen sum.

When the war of the Spanish succession began in Northern Italy in 1702, Massner was appointed by Austria, largely in the interests of the Grisons League, to watch over the smuggling, and was nicknamed "the Imperial Captain and Chief Commissary of Contraband."

In this capacity, in 1706 he surprised a French courier, Sonnery, on the Lake of Como, who, coming from Lombardy with messages, was on his way to France. He carried with him the official mail destined for Prince Eugen. This Massner confiscated, together with contraband goods to the value of 2,000 thalers, to recompense himself for goods of his own confiscated by the French in Germany at a profit of 1000 doubloons.

This insult inflicted on France, as well as the substantial services which Massner had rendered

to the Emperor in this war, could not go unavenged. The French ambassador du Luc at Solothurn invented a method with the aid of his secretary, Francois de Merveilleux.

In 1710 Massner's 16 year old son Thomas went to Geneva to learn the French language and boarded with a clergyman named Maurice. Secretary Merveilleux sent his young brother Samuel to the same place. Worming his way into young Massner's confidence he invited him with great friendliness to go for a walk to the village of Grange-Canal on the French frontier. Purposely the boundary line was crossed, and at once the two young men heard a loud dispute and found themselves in the hands of the French pickets. Merveilleux was set free, but young Massner was carried to the citadel of Lyons. This happened in April, 1710. In the meantime, as du Luc's representative, Secretary Merveilleux came to Coire, where Councillor Massner, discovering the trick played upon his son, went in company with a few armed men to his lodging in the morning of May 12th and made him prisoner, carrying him off to his own house, as had been agreed should be done by the corporation. Merveilleux himself declared at this time that he was well treated by Massner. Du Luc used all his influence with the town council in order to get his secretary away, even promising that within the space of three weeks young Massner should be released and allowed to return to Coire.

Massner therefore determined to see du Luc personally in Solothurn, and Merveilleux, having given his solemn word not to leave the town until his return, was given his liberty. A few days later Merveilleux broke his parole and escaped.

At Solothurn du Luc demanded from Massner for the freedom of his son that he should sign an ignoble declaration which would have debased him in his own esteem. This he promptly refused to do; but his father's heart urged him against even his own honour, and he returned to tell du Luc that he agreed, but was told that his sacrifice came too late as the letter had already been sent to the King.

At Massner's request the Confederates and the Allied Powers applied to France officially for the young man's release, but without any success. Massner was again thrown upon his own resources. He racked his brains for another forfeit by which he could force them to liberate his only child. Finally he bethought him of the treasurer of the French Embassy, the rich banker La Chapelle of Solothurn with whom he himself had transacted business. He therefore invited him to come to the much-frequented Autumn Fair at Zurich, and it was agreed that both should arrive there before it began. La Chapelle promised to come. Massner, accompanied by five of his specially chosen 'bravi,' floated on a raft down the Rhine. At the hour appointed for the meeting he hid his men among the bushes on the banks and awaited his business acquaintance. The latter arrived and they walked up and down for a while and then La Chapelle, who was probably growing suspicious, without any warning broke off the conversation and withdrew, which so upset Massner that he forgot to give his men the sign agreed upon. Thus the plot miscarried.

Massner returned in haste to Coire, but he was not the man to be thwarted in his purpose by obstacles. Soon after this he learned that His Highness the Duke of Vendôme, Grand Prior of the Order of the Knights of Malta, brother of the Marshal of Vendôme and cousin of Louis XIV, coming from Italy would pass through Coire.

On the 17th October, the day on which Vendôme was expected, Massner and his 'bravi,' together with a number of young men from Coire, waited in Sargans, near the Felsburger Bridge. As the Duke neared it, Massner rode out to meet him and declared that he and his suite were prisoners. At the same time numerous troops came to Massner's aid and the French gentlemen were obliged to yield to numbers. Massner explained to the Duke the cause of this hold-up and led him and his followers to a neighbouring inn, called the "White Winepress," where they were given good rooms, well served meals, and excellent accommodation for the night under the strict guard of Massner's men.

In the morning the French prisoners were taken up the Rhine on three rafts as far as Balzers, and there imprisoned in the country house of Vaduz in the Vorarlberg; here Massner gave the Duke and his followers his word of honour that as soon as his son was set at liberty, they would receive their freedom and be set on Swiss territory.

After waiting in vain for seven weeks for the boy to be set free, Massner proceeded to hand the Duke over to the Austrian military authorities. He was taken to Vienna, but gave Massner on this account so little trouble that in the following year, 1711, he was able to return to Paris determined to seek his boy's freedom even in that quarter.

And here diplomatic circles began to get excited. France demanded that the Duke be instantly set free, and that Massner be heavily punished. Austria and her Allies spoke in his favour, declaring that the national laws permitted reprisals and that his only mistake was in taking that law

into his own hands.

The knotty problem of his guilt was turned over to the electors for decision. On December 7th, 1710, this body met to classify the votes. This was no easy matter, for they did not agree. Party feeling ran high, some being for Austria, others for France, and the last named proved to be in the majority. Austria had lost much sympathy by her behaviour in matters of rights of way. As a result it was decided that Massner was to be punished. Secondly, it was arranged that if possible before the 23rd of January, 1711, Vendôme must be found, either where he was a prisoner, or placed upon Swiss territory. Thirdly, Massner must pay all costs. The question arose as to whether Massner's offence came under the heading of common law! Before the Court met a pamphlet was printed anonymously (but in reality printed by Merveilleux), asserting that Massner had repeatedly sent smuggled goods.

The accused man, replying to these insults, stated that they were a pack of wicked lies, and the English and Austrian representatives agreed in defending him.

There was a rapid volley of vituperative letters from the ambassadors, Grenth threatening to hold up the grain supply; du Luc demanding the immediate punishment of Massner, and Mannings, the English chargé d'affaires, making du Luc a laughing-stock and showing that Merveilleux was a man utterly devoid of honour. In fact, little by little the real character of Merveilleux was so clearly shown that du Luc was obliged to dismiss him from his service. "All this diplomatic interference only served to envenom the quarrel," writes Zchokke, "and it became a political affair from that time forth. The government of the Grisons made vain efforts to secure the release of both prisoners."

Meanwhile Mannings was assassinated at the baths of Pfeffers.

When the Senate met in January Massner had not as yet succeeded in securing the liberation of Vendôme, though he had even appealed to Vienna. Massner wrote to the Senate: "I am resolved to protect my rightful cause and to achieve success for my innocent boy as long as there remains a drop of Bundner and father-blood in my body as well as breath."

He was so wrought up in his defence before the Senate that he challenged one of his bitterest opponents, Rudolf von Salis, to fight a duel. The verdict was that Massner was to be given a respite till April 4th for the freeing of the Duke of Vendôme.

A special court of punishment was to meet at Ilanz on July 15th.

This court consisted of 24 members, mostly French partisans and Massner's avowed enemies, who had gathered all the most damning evidence imaginable against him. It asserted that in 1691 he had captured the French courier Sonnery, and had Merveilleux arrested by a band of masked men, who treated him so brutally that he nearly died. (Only afterwards did they learn that Merveilleux was the instigator of the whole evil plot.) Massner was also accused of the theft of merchandise to the value of 22,000 thalers and money from the Milanese treasure chests, which, with the help of three other men, who were named, he had replaced by stones of the same weight. For good measure they added false coining and poisonings, these last utterly groundless and the former stories of theft unprovable. False witnesses who had been bribed vouched for these sorry deeds. As he was not to be reached and no portrait of him could be found, a clever judge drew his face upon a piece of paper and this was publicly burnt by the executioner amid great rejoicing. Massner lost much of his fortune, though when an inventory was made he was still very well off. At the plea of his wife, his house was not demolished and it was still standing in 1892, according to Dr. P. C. Planta, from whose "Geschichte von Graubünden" most of this chronicle is taken.

The League of the Ten Jurisdictions had nominated Massner for bailiff of Mayenfeld; but the Swiss Cantons, on the contrary, declared him beyond the law and set a price on his head.

The Grisons finally proscribed the unfortunate man at the Court of Punishment held at Ilanz on the 17th August, 1711, his fortune was ordered confiscated, he himself was to be drawn and quartered, and a portion of his body exposed at the corners of the main thoroughfare of Coire, his house to be razed to the ground and on its site a column of shame to be erected upon which were to be inscribed his misdeeds; finally, as Massner had fled to the Vorarlberg, a reward of a thousand ducats was offered to whoever should capture him, dead or alive.

Meanwhile Massner had gone to Vienna to endeavour to put an end to this embroglio by securing the liberation of the Grand Prior which, after great difficulty, he succeeded in doing. The Duke of Vendôme agreed to the conditions imposed upon him, namely, that he would appeal in person to Louis XIV. for the release of the unhappy young Massner, and also see that no legal proceedings were instituted against the father; failing in this, he agreed to place himself again under arrest within three months.

(*This delightful page of history is reprinted from the March number of the "Swiss Monthly.")

For a long while Massner remained at Vienna under the Emperor's protection, but after a while he found the friendly attitude changed to one of coolness and he could no longer endure it.

Heartbroken, homesick and ill, Massner braved the terrible sentence in order to return to his native land. He wandered as a fugitive in the quiet valleys of Glaris; but du Luc's spies discovered him and demanded his delivery. Massner, warned in time, hid himself at night in a farm wagon filled with straw which was going in the direction of Balzers. When on the other side of the Rhine, owing to the badly kept roads of those days, the wagon upset and Massner was mortally injured, dying a few hours later, on Austrian territory and in safety, but too late! So ended this man, who, while he may have transgressed, was truly great in his paternal love, facing such tremendous odds singlehanded in his endeavour to rescue his boy.

Peace was concluded at Baden in 1714 between France and Austria. Among the plenipotentiaries of the Emperor was a nephew of Thomas Massner, who, after strenuous efforts eventually succeeded in getting his cousin out of the dungeon where he had been kept for four years.

When young Massner returned to his home he was received with universal expressions of esteem and delight, and his fellow citizens did their best to atone for his sufferings by covering with honours this innocent victim of great nations at war.

EMILY KEENE BARNUM.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

In connection with the scholastic programme the following lectures were given by the students during last week:—

Miss M. Homberger, Zurich: "A Trip across Umbria." Miss A. Keller, Winterthur: "Holidays in the Canton of Grisons." Miss Bertie Schneider, Winterthur: "A Salad." Mr. F. Michel, Interlaken: "Spiritualism." Mr. Fr. Jaeggi, Solothurn: "Pro Juventute." Miss Berta Hilfler, Rüslikon-Zeh: "Shopping." Mr. Hans Muller, Buchs: "Hotellerie." Mr. Alfred Galli, Burgdorf: "Political Crimes." Mr. Emil Kellenberger, Zurich: "The Financial Situation of the U.S.A." Miss M. Siegenthaler, Bern: "The Eternal Flame." Mr. Emil Bucher: "Personal Aspects of Modern Sports." Mr. Hermann Steiger: "Buried Alive." Some aspects of the relations between the Swiss artist and his country. Mr. K. Rau: "My Journey from Basle to London."

The debating classes dealt with the following subjects:—

"Has the Russian Revolution been for the benefit of the Russian people?" Proposer, Mr. H. Guggisberg; Opposer, Mr. Y. Jéquier, Neuchâtel.

"Which is preferable, Private Management or State Management?" Proposer, Mr. Eugene Walder, Lucerne; Opposer, Mr. A. Bossi, Basel.

"Have you any faith in the League of Nations?" Proposer, Mr. A. Herzog, Huttwil; Opposer, Mr. L. Haas, Zurich.

A.O.F.B., SWISS VAT.

The second Dinner and Concert was held at the "Swiss Hotel," Old Compton Street, W., on the 16th March, when about 70 members of the Order were present.

Tornado Coleman took the Chair, and announced the entry of the various officers, who attended the meeting in full regalia. Tornado Wyss, the host, then took over his official duties as Chairman. The members then sat down to dinner, and they had the choice of either English or Swiss dishes, which was greatly appreciated by all. After dinner a splendid Concert was given and enjoyed by everyone.

An American auction for a copy of a picture, "The Lake of Uri," was then held and realised the magnificent sum of £5 5s. Miss D. Ballieu, the buyer of the picture, returned it for re-auction at another meeting. The amount paid for the picture, together with the out-box—the collecting with which kept certain members busy—totalled the sum of £10 0s, 6d., 50 per cent. of which will be given to the Swiss Poor in London and 50 per cent. to Sir Alfred Frapp's Fund for his Wee Waifs.

58e FÊTE SUISSE DE LONDRES, 1927.

Avec le mois de Mars, le Comité de la Fête Suisse s'est réuni comme de coutume pour prendre connaissance du rapport du Trésorier et des résultats généraux de la fête de l'année précédente, la 57e en nombre. Cette séance a eu lieu Lundi dernier, M. Borsinger ayant eu l'amabilité de venir représenter le Ministre.

Le Trésorier a constaté que les comptes de l'année 1926 soldaient de façon satisfaisante et qu'un don spécial de £5 5s, avait pu être versé au Fonds de Secours, grâce à ce résultat favorable.

Celui-ci est dû essentiellement à la participation enthousiaste des compatriotes venus en très grand nombre l'année dernière. Toute l'atmosphère de la Fête en a grandement bénéficié. Par contre, certains arrangements d'ordre pratique ont quelque peu souffert de cette affluence extraordinaire.

Aussi le Comité, heureux de voir que notre vieux "Thé Suisse" conserve sa vogue au sein de la Colonie, a-t-il voté à l'unanimité le principe de la célébration de la 58e Fête. Il l'a fixée au Mercredi, 22 Juin, à Caxton Hall.

D'autre part, soucieux de ses devoirs envers tous ceux qui participent à la Fête, il a décidé de louer, en outre des locaux employés jusqu'ici, la belle salle du premier (council chamber) où un grand buffet pourra être installé, et quelques pièces en sus, pour servir de vestiaires. L'ancien buffet (lounge) au rez de chaussée, pourra faire office de pièce de dégagement, s'il y'a un trop plein.

De la sorte, la Colonie retrouvera à Caxton Hall tout ce qu'elle avait jadis à Portman Rooms, ou à peu près, et le Comité espère que ces arrangements nouveaux ajouteront un charme de plus à notre bonne vieille Fête de Juin, qui date de 1864 déjà. Le buffet agrandi permettra en tous cas, semble-t-il, à chacun de profiter véritablement de l'entre acte encore prolongé, en dégustant quelque douceur en compagnie d'amis.

D'autres détails seront publiés par la suite.
Le Secrétaire.

PERSONAL.

The many friends of Mr. G. Cusi will be glad to hear that he is deriving great benefit from his sojourn at Lugano, where he has been staying for some weeks in order to recuperate from his recent illness.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED.

(The figure in parentheses denotes the number of the issue on which the subscription expires.)

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6.30.—Service liturgique: la Passion et musical.
7.30.—Répétition du Choeur.
Jeudi, 31 Mars.—Au Foyer, 8h.—Réunion de Mission des jeunes filles.

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St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

Sonntag, den 27 März.—11 Uhr vorm.: Predigt.
7 Uhr abends: Predigt. Daran anschliessend Chorprobe.

KREMATIION.

Gottlieb FÜRRE aus Ichertswil, Bezirk Bucheggberg, Kanton Solothurn, geb. am 3 Dez., 1865, gest. am 17 März, 1927 in London.—Kremation am 22 März, 1927.

Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12—1 Uhr in der Kirche.
Mittwoch, 3—5 Uhr, im Foyer Suisse.
Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen, etc., an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde C. Th. Hahn, 8, Chiswick Lane, W.4. Telephone Chiswick 4156.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, March 26th.—SWISS RIFLE ASSOC.: Opening of the Shooting Range at Hendon (opposite the Welsh Harp).

Sunday, March 27th.—SWISS GYMNASIIC SOC.: Display and Dance at 1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

Wednesday, March 30th, at 8 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Jass and Bookbier Abend at Swiss House, 34-35, Fitzroy Sq., W.1.

Saturday, April 2nd, at 6.30 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Cinderella Dance at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras Station, N.W.

Sunday, April 3rd, at 6.30 p.m.—SWISS INSTITUTE: Concert at Swiss House, 34-35, Fitzroy Square, W.4.

Tuesday, April 12th, at 7 p.m.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Annual General Meeting at Pagan's, 42, Great Portland Street, W.1.

Saturday, May 28th, at 2.30 p.m.—SWISS SPORTS at the Herne Hill Athletic Ground.

SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY.—Rehearsals every Friday evening. Every Swiss heartily invited to attend. Particulars from the Hon. Secretary, Swiss Choral Society, 74 Charlotte Street, W.1.

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